

## THE RIGHT OF WAY.

"Yes," said the conductor biting off the tip of a cigar and slowly scratching a match on his leg: "I've seen a good deal of railroad life that's interesting and exciting in the twenty years that I've been twisting brakes and slamming the doors for a living."

"I've seen all kinds of sorrow and all kinds of joy—seen the happy bridal couple starting out on their wedding tour with the bright and hopeful future before them, and the black robed mourner on her way to a new-made grave wherein she must bury the idol of her lonely old heart."

"Wealth and pinching poverty ride on the same train, and the merry laugh of the joyous, healthy child is mingled with the despairing sigh of the aged. The great antipodes of life are familiar to the conductor, for every day the extremes of the world are meeting beneath his eye."

"I've mutilated the ticket of many a black-leg, and handled the passes of all our most eminent dead-heads. I don't know what walk in life is more crowded with thrilling incidents than mine."

"Ever have any smash-ups?"

"Smash-ups? Oh, yes, several. None, however, that might not have been worse."

"There is one incident of my railroad life," continued the conductor, running his tongue carefully over a broken place in the wrapper of his cigar: "that I never spoke of before to any one. It has caused me more misery and wretchedness than any one thing that ever happened to me in my official career."

"Sometimes, even now, after the lapse of many years, I awake in the night with the cold drops of agony standing on my face and the horrible nightmare upon me with its terrible surroundings, as plain as on the memorable night it occurred."

"I was running extra on the Union Pacific for a conductor who was an old friend of mine, and who had gone South on a vacation for his health."

"About 7:30, as near as I can remember, we were sailing along all comfortably one evening with a straight stretch of track ahead for ten or fifteen miles running on time and everybody feeling tip-top, as overland travelers do who are acquainted with each other and feel congenial. All at once the train suddenly slowed down, ran in an old siding and stopped."

"Of course I got out and ran ahead of the engine to see what the matter was. Old Antifat, the engineer, had gone down and was on the main track looking ahead to where, twinkling along about six or seven miles down the road, apparently, was the headlight of an approaching train. It was evidently 'wild' for nothing was due that we knew of at that hour."

"However, we had been almost miraculously saved from a frightful wreck by the engineer's watchfulness, and everybody went forward and shook old Antifat by the hand and cried and thanked him until it was the most affecting scene for a while that I ever witnessed. It was as though we had stopped at the very verge of a bottomless chasm, and everybody was crying at once, till it was a kind of a cross between a revival and a picnic."

"After we had waited about half an hour, I should say, for the blasted train to come up and pass us, and, apparently, she was no nearer, a cold, clammy suspicion began to bore itself into the adamant shell of my intellect. The more I thought of it, the more unhappy I felt. I almost wished that I was dead. Cold streaks ran up my back, followed by hot ones. I wanted to go home. I wanted to be where the hungry, prying eyes of the great, throbbing work-day world could not see me."

"I called Antifat to one side and said something to him. He swore softly to himself and kicked the ground, and looked at the headlight still glimmering in the distance. Then he got on his engine and I yelled 'All aboard!' In a few moments we were moving again, and the general impression was that the train ahead was side-tracked and waiting for us, although there wasn't a side track within twenty miles, except the one we had just left."

"It was never exactly clear to the passengers where we passed that wild train, but I didn't explain it to them. I was too much engrossed with my surging thoughts."

"I never felt my own inferiority so much as I did that night. I never so fully realized what a mere speck man is upon the bosom of the universe."

"When I surveyed the stony vault of heaven and considered its illimitable space, where, beyond and stretching on and on forever, countless suns are placed as centres around which their regular orbits, each little world peopled, perhaps with its teeming millions of struggling humanity, and then other and mightier systems of worlds revolving about these systems till the

mind is dazed and giddy with the mighty thought; and then when I compare all this universal magnificence, this brilliant aggregations of worlds and systems of worlds, with one poor, groveling worm of the dust, only a little insignificant atom, only a poor, weak, erring, worthless, fallible, blind, groping railroad conductor, with my train peacefully side-tracked in the gathering gloom and patiently waiting for the planet Venus to pass on the main track, there was something about the whole sombre picture that has overshadowed my whole life and made me unhappy and wretched while others were gay."

"Sometimes Antifat and myself meet at some liquid restaurant and silently take something in memory of our great sorrow, but don't mention it. We never tear open the old ranking wound or laugh over the night we politely gave the main track to Venus while we stood patiently on the siding."

### The Utility of Drunkenness.

Darwin shows that the onward progress, the development, or what may be described as the collective prosperity of the species, is brought about by over-multiplication, followed by a necessary struggle for existence, in the course of which the inferior or unsuitable individuals are weeded out, and "the survival of the fittest" necessarily follows; these superior or more suitable specimens transmit more or less of their advantages to their offspring, which, still multiplying excessively, are again and again similarly sifted and improved or developed in a boundless course of forward evolution."

In the earliest stages of human existence, the fittest for survival were those whose brutal or physical energies best enabled them to struggle with the physical difficulties of their surroundings, to subjugate the crudities of the primeval plains and forests to human requirements. The perpetual struggles of the different tribes gave the dominion of the earth to those best able to rule it; the strongest and the most violent human animal was then the fittest, and he survived accordingly."

Then came another era of human efforts gradually culminating in the present period. In this, mere muscular strength, brute physical power, and mere animal energy have become less and less demanded as we have, by the aid of physical science, imprisoned the physical forces of nature in our steam-boilers, batteries, etc., and have made them our slaves in lieu of human prisoners of war. The course muscular, raving, fighting human animal that formerly led the war-dance, the hunt, and the battle, is no longer the fittest for survival, but is, on the contrary, daily becoming more and more out of place. His prize-fights, his dog-fights, his cockpits, and bull-baiting are practically abolished, his fox-hunting and bird shooting are only carried on at a great expense by a wealthy residuum, and by damaging interference with civilized agriculture. The unfitness of the remaining representatives of the primeval savage is manifest, and their survival is purely prejudicial to the present interests and future progress of the race."

Such being the case, we now require some means of eliminating these coarse, more brutal, or purely animal specimens of humanity, in order that there may be more room for the survival and multiplication of the more intellectual, more refined, and altogether distinctively human specimens. It is desirable that this should be effected by some natural or spontaneous proceeding of self-extinction, performed by the animal specimens themselves. If this self-immolation can be a process that is enjoyable in their own estimation, all the objections to it that might otherwise be suggested by our feelings of humanity are removed."

Now, these conditions are exactly fulfilled by the alcoholic drinks of the present day when used for the purpose of obtaining intoxication.—W. Mattie Williams, in Popular Science Monthly for October.

### Robbing an Editor.

An editor heard a fellow in his room, and, rousing up, asked, "Who is there?"

The burglar made no reply, but kept on searching.

"What do you want?" shouted the editor.

"Money," responded the burglar. "Well, hold on," said the editor, "I'll get up and help you; I've been looking for that for the last twenty years."

In boring an artesian well in California the drill struck the bones of a whale sixty feet under ground. He was perhaps looking for a short cut from the Pacific to Hudson's Bay.

Georgia duels are now fought with crow-bars, and the man with the longest feet is the one who gets hurt the worst.

### A Strange Request.

"Come in," said the Governor as a woman hesitated at the doorway and peered cautiously into the executive chamber. "Come in, madam; be seated," and the urbane ruler of the state of Arkansas, stepped nimbly around the room, bowing with mathematical exactness. "What can I do for you?"

"Governor," said the woman after recognizing the ruler's politeness and depositing her gingham bag on the floor and herself on a chair, "I have come to you on business of the highest importance. I am a lone widow, with not a neighbor in half a mile of me. I haven't got but one old horse and my cow died some time ago."

"But what can I do for you, madam?"

"That's what I come to tell you. If I hadn't come you never would have known what a great favor you could confer on me. I am a lone widow with not a neighbor in half a mile of me. Some time ago my son, Stephen, killed a man and is now waiting to be hanged. I have come to you."

"Madam, I can do nothing for you. Your son has had a fair trial, and in the opinion of twelve honorable men, he ought to die. His crime is the greatest upon which the law squints its avenging eye. Your loneliness arouses my sympathy, and, believe me, my good madam, that the Governor of Arkansas knows how to sympathize with a woman, who, like yourself, is struggling under a great affliction."

"Did you ever have a son hung, Governor?"

"No, not of my own. But I have signed the chemical change warrants of other people's sons. Believe me—for I am out of politics—when I say that I sympathize with you."

"Governor, you do not understand me," pleaded the woman. "I am a lone widow without a neighbor in—"

"I understand that, madam; I understand that."

"But you can do me a great favor. You have consented to the death of my son, my only support. I have been in better circumstances—"

"So have I, madam. I was not always Governor of Arkansas."

"I was once well off and my son was reared tenderly, carefully. When he was young he suffered with severe sore throat and since then he could never wear a starched shirt-collar. I know that the rope which has been selected for his extermination is stiff and harsh, and as a favor to a widow who hasn't a neighbor within half a mile of her, use this plush covered rope," and opening the pucker of the gingham bag she took out a large red cord. "I did not come to ask for my son's pardon; I only ask to have respect for his tender bringing up."

The governor looked, with irrigated eye, upon the poor supplicating woman. Turning to the window and looking far over the river at a man plowing a yoke of young steers, he remarked: "Never before was there an exhibition of such beautiful consideration," and turning he exclaimed with dramatic emotion: "Your request shall be granted. Your son shall die the death of luxurious stragulation."

The woman was moved beyond elocution, and while in her aged eyes there glowed the warm light of heartfelt thanks, she hung the plush-covered rope across the back of a chair and departed.—Arkansas Traveler.

The title of the lesson was, "The Rich Young Man," and the golden text was "One thing thou lackest." A teacher in the primary class asked a boy to repeat the two, and looking earnestly into the young lady's face the child said: "One thing thou lackest—a rich young man."

"Do you own this fence?" savagely inquired a farmer of a tramp who was hanging over the structure. "No, I don't own it," grinned the nomad, "but I've got a lean on it."

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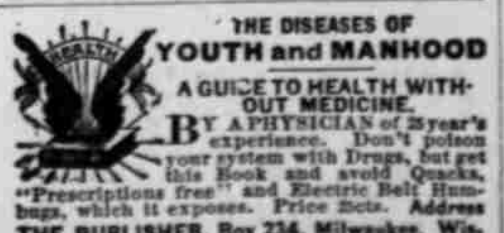
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